

Message Text

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44

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 OMB-01 CIEP-01 SAJ-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

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R 151009Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

CINCPAC HONOLULU

S E C R E T BANGKOK 18068

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: THAILAND: ONE YEAR AFTER THE FALL

REF: BANGKOK A-305, NOVEMBER 15, 1974 (POUCH NO. OT-2111)

1. REF IS AN ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN THAILAND ONE YEAR AFTER THE FALL OF THE THANOM GOVERNMENT. BELOW IS A SUMMARY OF THE AIRGRAM.

2. THE SANYA GOVERNMENT WHICH TOOK OFFICE FOLLOWING THE VIOLENT CONFRONTATION BETWEEN STUDENTS AND SECURITY FORCES ON OCTOBER 14, 1973, HAS DONE A CREDITABLE JOB OF MANAGING THE COUNTRY WHILE PROMULGATING A CONSTI-

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TUTION AND PREPARING FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS. IT HAS

TAKEN SOME PRACTICAL MEASURES TO KEEP INFLATION UNDER CONTROL, ADDRESSED THE PROBLEMS OF FARMERS AND WORKERS, AND APPROVED A PLAN TO RATIONALIZE THE VILLAGE DEFENSE AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM IN INSURGENT-AFFECTED AREAS. IT HAS BROUGHT CAPABLE YOUNG TECHNOCRATS INTO POLICY FORMULATION. IT HAS CONDUCTED FOREIGN POLICY CAPABLY, RESPONDING TO PUBLIC PRESSURES BUT PRESERVING THAILAND'S "SPECIAL" RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES. ITS GREATEST FAILURE HAS BEEN ITS INABILITY TO PROJECT A PUBLIC IMAGE OF DECISIVENESS AND SELF-CONFIDENCE. ON BALANCE, SANYA'S GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN RESPONSIVE TO PUBLIC NEEDS AND ACTED AS AN IMPARTIAL ARBITRATOR AMONG COMPETING INTERESTS DURING THE GESTATION PERIOD IN WHICH A MORE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT MAY BE BORN.

3. PERHAPS THE GREATEST CHANGE IN THAILAND SINCE OCTOBER 1973 IS THE PROLIFERATION OF GROUPS PARTICIPATING IN NATIONAL POLITICS AND POLICY MAKING. THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY HAS BEEN AN INDEPENDENT AND CREATIVE LEGISLATURE. THE MILITARY REMAIN A POWERFUL PRESSURE GROUP BEHIND THE SCENES. THE KING HAS INTERVENED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS WHEN HE THOUGHT IT NECESSARY, ALTHOUGH HE PREFERS TO KEEP THE MONARCHY IN ITS LOFTY POSITION ABOVE POLITICS. THE STUDENTS, THOUGH BESET BY DISUNITY AND DECLINING PUBLIC SUPPORT, REMAIN A POLITICAL DETERRENT TO A MILITARY COUP. LABOR AND FARMERS HAVE USED THEIR NEW FREEDOM TO PRESSURE THE GOVERNMENT TO IMPROVE THEIR LOT. POLITICAL PARTIES ARE AGAIN LEGAL AND ARE PREPARING FOR GENERAL ELECTIONS.

4. THE PAST YEAR HAS GIVEN SOME GROUNDS FOR HOPE THAT THAILAND'S EXPERIMENT WITH A MORE DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT WILL SUCCEED, AT LEAST FOR THE NEAR FUTURE. FUTURE SUPPORT FOR THIS EXPERIMENT WILL DEPEND ON THE ABILITY AND STABILITY OF THE POST-ELECTION CABINET. IF IT FAILS, THE MILITARY COULD RESUME CONTROL.

5. THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE FEW MONTHS IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING ELECTIONS WILL CONTINUE THE SENSITIVE PERIOD

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THAT THAI/U.S. RELATIONS HAVE BEEN UNDERGOING SINCE MID-1973. SOME CANDIDATES WILL UNDOUBTEDLY ATTACK OUR MILITARY PRESENCE, BUT THAT WILL NOT BE A PRIME ISSUE FOR MOST VOTERS. ALTHOUGH WE EXPECT THE NEXT CABINET TO WORK WITH THE UNITED STATES, IT SHOULD PROVE AT LEAST AS RESPONSIVE TO PUBLIC OPINION AS THE CURRENT CABINET. WE SHOULD ANTICIPATE ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS ON OUR PRESENCE HERE. PRESERVING OUR IMPORTANT INTERESTS

IN THAILAND WILL THEREFORE REQUIRE GREAT FLEXIBILITY
ON OUR PART. WE MUST EVENTUALLY CONVINCE THE THAI THAT
A LIMITED U.S. PRESENCE MAY BE DISTINCTLY ADVANTAGEOUS TO
BOTH COUNTRIES.
KINTNER

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